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Citation

University of Michigan Law School, "The Law School's Placement Office" (1955). *Miscellaneous Law School Publications*.
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THE LAW SCHOOL'S PLACEMENT OFFICE

This pamphlet has been prepared for the guidance of Michigan Law School students who will face the task of finding an opportunity to use their legal education after graduation. Its purpose is to describe the function and activities of the Law School's Placement Office and to provide some information about the nature of the task confronting a lawyer seeking work.

"Placement" in Law

Before describing the facilities and work of the Placement Office, it is necessary to understand that the task confronting a lawyer seeking a job is substantially different from that faced by many other classes of highly trained persons. Much of this difference is attributable to the nature of the service desired of a lawyer. Much of it is explained by an understanding of the organization and methods of the profession's basic unit, the private law firm. Finally, the broad range of activities for which lawyers are especially qualified and the resulting variety of opportunities tends to make the task of a graduating law student unique.

The very nature of a lawyer's work precludes the idea that there can be anything like an employment agency for lawyers. No matter what his job, a lawyer is hired to assume responsibility for the affairs of other people. Whether his services are desired by an individual, a law firm, a corporation or a governmental agency, this specialist in the affairs of people is expected by someone somewhere to solve problems or handle situations involving another person's name, reputation, or financial interests. Obviously, therefore, few persons will trust the judgment of another in selecting their lawyer. Employers of lawyers are vitally concerned with an applicant's personality, intelligence, courage, tact, judgment and maturity, but they are not willing that their judgment about how such intangibles are measured or appraised be supplanted by some other person's opinion. They are, of course, interested in the opinions of others as aids to the exercise of their own judgment.

Similarly, the fact that many employers impose minimum standards of various sorts to narrow their search for what they deem to be the right man does not contradict the essentially personal basis upon which lawyers are hired. Meeting all announced qualifications does not mean you get the job. Conversely, failure to measure up to announced standards does not necessarily mean that you cannot get the job. Such standards are only aids to the formation of judgment; rarely are they used as substitutes for judgment.

The essential problem is one of establishing contacts between prospective employers and job applicants, and it is to this problem that much of the Placement Office's work is directed. In addition, the Placement Office attempts to assist both parties to the employment transaction by transmitting all authorized information which it has about one party to the other.

If the Placement Office could be looked to as the source of leads to all available jobs, the prospective graduate's task of learning of opportunities of interest to him would be simple. Unfortunately, however, the typical private law firm is a rather unique business association with qualities which limit the effectiveness of any organization undertaking to provide comprehensive job information.

The organization of many small law firms is rather hit and miss, and most law firms are rather small, e.g., from two to five lawyers. Typically, the realization that a need for an additional lawyer exists develops rather slowly as the members find themselves becoming more and more occupied with the demands of the practice. When the decision to find a new person is reached, matters have usually progressed to the point where all of the active men are carrying far too great a work load. This generates pressure to find someone in a hurry, and the word goes out in all directions that the firm is "looking for someone". Sometimes, some of the members will write to their alma maters to ask for help, but frequently the next good looking candidate to chance through the office in search of a job lands the job.

In the larger firms, particularly those giants with twenty or more lawyers, more thought and care is exercised in the selection of new personnel, simply because the routine of adding an additional person is more familiar. A hiring partner will be designated to establish contacts with the various schools and keep track of "walk-in" applicants. Frequently, this sort of firm will realize the value of visiting the various law schools to interview prospective graduates. The difficulty is that this sort of planning is comparatively rare. Too many law firm jobs still depend upon a prospective employee being at the right place at the right time. Obviously, therefore, the Placement Office should not be viewed as the source of leads to all jobs in law firms even if it be credited with far more efficiency than it possesses. It can and does urge its graduates who are prospective employers to take enough time in selecting new personnel to allow for a visit to the Law School for interviews, or at least to give the Law School some advance warning when a position is to be filled, so that students and graduates seeking employment can be put on notice. In spite of all efforts, however, prospective graduates should recognize the value and necessity of a personal tour of all good law offices, particularly the smaller ones, in any area in which they would like to locate.

The variety of opportunities open to lawyers makes the process of finding congenial employment complex. Traditionally, people attend law school to prepare themselves for the private practice of law. The private practice is not, however, the only career which a graduating law student may anticipate. Local state and federal governmental units require the services of many lawyers. Business units in all fields of endeavor are seeking the service of an increasingly large number of legally trained personnel, not only for their law departments but as executive trainees. Trust companies, insurance companies, title companies and management counselling organizations frequently are staffed largely by lawyers. In addition to the problem of selecting a career thus presented, this variety makes it impossible to standardize any single approach for uncovering all job opportunities.

To assist Michigan law students in making an intelligent choice of career, the Placement Office provides a counseling service for individual students. In addition, men representing various kinds of work are invited to come to the school to talk to interested students about the advantages of their particular field. Finally, a variety of literature, legal directories, and other material relating to placement in law, some of which is described in more detail later in this pamphlet, is kept on hand in the Placement Office for use by students.

In addition to furnishing these services designed to aid the student in selecting a career, the Placement Office is continually working to broaden the scope of its contacts. Many federal and state governmental agencies regularly include notice to us of their personnel needs, and others are constantly being invited to use our facilities. With increasing frequency, various kinds of commercial concerns are looking to us for references to men whose training qualifies them for consideration as executive trainees.

It is still true, however, that most job notices for positions not requiring the services of legally trained persons, but for which lawyers are eligible, are received by the Bureau of Appointments of the University. Law students especially interested in non-legal openings are entitled to use the services of this office which is located in Room 3528, Administration Building. Notices of personnel interviews scheduled by this office are regularly published in The Michigan Daily as a part of the University's Daily Official Bulletin.

Placement Office Procedures

The Placement Meeting

In order to render meaningful assistance to students, it is necessary that the personnel of the Placement Office, e.g.

the Placement Director and the Placement Secretary, become personally acquainted with each student. The process of becoming acquainted is initiated at a placement meeting held sometime during the fall semester for all interested second year students. At this meeting placement procedures are outlined, and an opportunity is given for general questions.

In addition, a key punch index card is circulated to be filled out by each student. These cards, when punched to reflect the information listed thereon by the student, provide a means of quick access to certain general qualifications and interests. In many cases, the information elicited on these cards may not reflect final decisions of a student as to his preferences for work. However, until such time as the student becomes better known to the Placement Office personnel, this card frequently is the only source of information to the students' preferences. Accordingly, it is well to give some thought in advance of the placement meeting to the following preferences which you will be asked to express on the index card:

- (a) A choice or an order of preference among private practice, corporate employment, or government service.
- (b) A choice or an order of preference among major geographical locations, e.g., east coast, central, northwest, southwest, and south.
- (c) A choice or an order of preference between practice in an urban area (cities over 50,000) and small town or rural practice.
- (d) An indication of any particular city which you would prefer as a location.

Biographical Statements

The next step in the process of becoming acquainted consists of the preparation and filing by each interested student of a biographical statement. The importance of this statement cannot be overemphasized. It becomes a part of the student's placement file which is exhibited to prospective employers. It is used as the basis for the letter of introduction which will be prepared upon request to accompany a student from the school. Finally, it usually serves as the principal source of future references and recommendations requested by former students or by some employer after graduation.

Experiences have indicated that an outline type of biographical statement is to be preferred. However, this

suggestion and the suggestions as to content which follow are not to be taken as rules, for each student should decide for himself how he can most effectively present his background, qualifications, interests, and personality to the Placement Office and to all other persons interested in these matters.

The statement should cover the following ground:

- (1) Name, date and place of birth, present legal residence, present address.
- (2) Name, address, occupation of parent or guardian.
- (3) Married or single, dependents, if any.
- (4) Academic record (High school and college). Schools and colleges attended, period of attendance, rank at graduation, degrees awarded and dates.
- (5) Scholastic honors--in college and law school.
- (6) Extra-curricular activities, athletics, debating, dramatics, fraternities and organizations in college and law school.
- (7) Outside employment and business experience in college and law school.
- (8) Military record, if any--including branch of service, organization, rank at time of discharge, period of service, places at which stationed, were you honorably discharged etc.
- (9) Special interests in connection with practice, e.g., part of country, size of city, character of professional service desired, etc.
- (10) Personal references (professors or others), i.e. persons who know you well enough to give a really helpful personal appraisal.
- (11) A photograph of yourself must be included with your biographical statement.

If more than one biographical statement is furnished, the Placement Office will make copies available to interested employers. We do not have the facilities for duplicating statements, however, so that students who desire that their statements reach the hands of interested employers must supply additional copies for this purpose.

The biographical statement should be taken to the Placement Office where it will form the basis of the student's

placement folder. When complete, this file will also include a summary of the interview with the Placement Director, copies of correspondence relating to the particular student, and supplemental appraisals and recommendations of the student which may be furnished by other members of the Law School faculty. A further word about appraisals and recommendations from other Law School faculty members is in order at this point.

Obviously, we are most interested in knowing of any faculty acquaintances which students have developed during their stay at Law School. When we learn of such acquaintances, the particular professor involved is requested to fill out a short form setting forth his opinion of the student in question. To aid us in obtaining faculty appraisals of the sort described, students are requested to submit a written list of the names of those faculty members from whom appraisals should be solicited when they file their biographical statements.

Occasionally, a student will have become sufficiently well acquainted with a particular member of the faculty to make a request for a special letter of recommendation from such faculty member appropriate. Such requests are perfectly in order when handled with due regard to the demands upon the time of teaching personnel.

Interview with the Placement Director

The next step in the process of becoming acquainted is the interview with the Placement Director. When the biographical statement is submitted, an appointment will be made for an interview. The principal purpose of the interview will be to discuss each student's particular wishes with reference to type of practice and location. You can assist in making the interview meaningful by giving as much thought as possible in advance of the meeting to your placement goals. If you have any particular questions you want to explore, it might be well to make a memorandum of them so that the discussion can cover the points which concern you.

It may not be inappropriate to inject one word of caution here. Many students feel it necessary to "play the field" to be sure that they uncover leads to all possible jobs which may interest them. Good jobs are not so hard to find as to make this practice necessary or advisable. It is far better to concentrate on the area and the sort of work which interests you than it is to indicate a general interest in anything and to waste your effort and that of the Placement Office by undue dilution of effort. Moreover, such an approach is often harmful to other students with a genuine interest in a given area. The Placement Office will discourage this maneuver whenever possible.

When the placement file has been completed by the inclusion of the summary of the placement interview, a letter of recommendation addressed "To whom it may concern" will be prepared for any student desiring it. This letter is useful principally as a means of introduction where there is no better means. Such letters will be made available to third year students in time for use during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. When special circumstances warrant the extra time and effort, similar letters can be obtained addressed to particular individuals or law firms and for use by people interested in finding summer employment between their second and third years in law school. In general, the aim of the letters will be to summarize the qualifications of training, background, experience, and personality of each student. Of necessity, the letters will be as frank and factual as possible.

Notice of Employment Opportunities

The Bulletin Boards, Placement Bulletin, Interviewers at the School

Once an acquaintanceship is established between the personnel of the Placement Office and the student, the task becomes one of getting information to the student about any job opportunities which appear to be appropriate. The Placement Office relies upon the placement bulletin board, which is located outside of Room 200, Hutchins Hall, and a special portion of the main bulletin board on the first floor of Hutchins Hall as a means of communication with students. It is important to understand how these boards are used and to form the habit of checking them frequently.

Normally when an employer notifies us that he is looking for a new lawyer, we obtain his authorization to publicize the fact among our students and graduates. All such opportunities are promptly posted on the second floor placement bulletin board. About once every month, notices of unfilled jobs are accumulated into a placement bulletin which is a mimeographed listing by states of all known opportunities. Such bulletins are available to all interested students in the Placement Office and are furnished to all graduates who have advised the school of their interest in receiving such information. These bulletins are intended for use only by our people. Your cooperation in seeing that they do not reach unauthorized persons is important.

Occasionally, an employer will ask us not to publicize the fact that an opening exists in his office. In such instances, the Placement Office in effect is asked to use its judgment in recommending particular students who appear especially qualified for the opening. Students with whom we are acquainted who appear qualified are then notified by

telephone call or by notice on the first floor bulletin board which requests them to contact the Placement Office. Frequently, it is extremely important that these messages be answered promptly so the importance of a regular perusal of the board can be seen.

Interviews at the School

An increasing number of employers are following the practice of sending interviewers to the school for the purpose of meeting and talking with eligible third year students. The Placement Office policy is to do everything possible to encourage this practice, for we firmly believe that it has definite advantages for both employer and prospective employee. For the employer, it represents a systematic approach calculated to place all prospects on an equal footing. For the student, it frequently provides an opportunity to talk with law firms representing various locations without the expense and difficulty of visiting each such location.

One of the disadvantages of this practice is that it is frequently characterized by stringent limitations imposed by the employer upon the qualifications of students. An employer who takes the time and trouble to journey to Ann Arbor typically believes himself entitled to limit the interviews to those persons having good scholastic records. As a consequence, the well-ranked people in the third year class frequently experience a number of interviews in Ann Arbor while the men in the lower half of the class occasionally are omitted.

Obviously, the Placement Office must abide by the wishes and instructions of visiting interviewers. However, we are constantly seeking to introduce persons whose academic records do not come up to announced standards, and frequently we have succeeded in doing so.

When an interviewer announces qualifications, the Placement Office contacts individually all students known to it to possess the designated qualifications. A schedule permitting a half hour per interview is worked out, and space is provided so that the interviewer and the selected students can meet in private. Such students are requested to fill out an interview form in the Placement Office before attending the interview. These forms in turn are made available to the interviewers and frequently form their record of the meeting.

When no particular standards are stipulated in connection with a request for interviews at the school, our practice is to invite all interested students to sign up on a first come-first serve basis. Such invitations appear upon the second floor placement bulletin board, and the responsibility is on each student to watch for such opportunities.

When interviewers visit the school, the student's placement file, his grade record, and his permanent file are made available to the interviewer unless a student has previously indicated that he desires some or all of this material to be withheld. Our assumption is that all of such material is authorized to be shown to prospective employers, but any instruction to the contrary will be scrupulously observed and no questions will be asked.

Job Hunting Expedition

Mention has been made of the importance of a visit by the student to the various law firms and employers in any area where he would like to practice or work. Such an expedition is frequently the only way of contacting firms in cities in remote sections of the country. In addition, it helps a student to appraise any particular firm in which he is interested by giving him a basis of comparison with others in the same area.

In planning a trip to any particular city for this purpose, it is advisable to use every available means of appraising the various law firms and employers. The legal directories, alumni lists, and the correspondence files kept in the Placement Office should be used as aids in this process. In addition, if a visit is planned to any city where one or more faculty members have practiced, it is suggested that arrangements be made for a conference with such faculty members so that the benefit of their knowledge of the area can be obtained. West's Teachers' Directory which is available in the Placement Office outlines the careers of all law teachers.

Once a student has determined which firms and employers he wants to visit, he should write in advance of his visit to request an appointment. A biographical statement along the lines of the one submitted to the Placement Office should be enclosed. By this process, firms having no need for assistance at the moment can be eliminated.

Most firms will be expecting visits from a number of law schools during the Christmas holidays and in some areas during the spring vacation. Prior notification to the firm of an intended visit during such periods is not as important as it is in case of visits during the "off seasons".

Regardless of the time of the visit, the appearance and conduct of the applicant during the visit has much to do with his success. A business suit and clean linen is the only acceptable garb. Do not go through with a planned visit unless you are physically and mentally capable of top performance. Generalizations about attitude are usually to the effect that an attitude of "restrained aggressiveness" is the most desir-

able. It is fatal, however, to attempt to put on an act. A job landed under false colors is not a job you will enjoy even if you are able to keep it. Above all, be yourself in an interview.

Typically, lawyers will be glad to take the time to talk with prospective lawyers. Occasionally, you will encounter a lawyer who has had a bad morning, but more commonly you will find the interview to be a pleasant and rewarding experience. You should be prepared to answer most any question, many of which will appear to have no relevance to the issue of your qualifications but which will be designed to test your reaction. Standard questions will include inquiries as to your favorite course or courses, your thoughts concerning specialization in particular fields of law, and your extra-curricular interests.

Some gauge of your success in the interview can be gained by the amount of time taken and the number of partners seen. The likely looking prospect will find that he is taken from one lawyer to another and that the entire visit may take as long as half a day. Do not expect immediate offers of employment although such offers sometimes do result from the first visit. More commonly, any offer made will be made by letter or telephone after the members of the firm have had a chance to review the qualifications of various applicants.

It is frequently important to follow-up an initial visit to a law firm. This is particularly true in the case of the smaller offices. A student must struggle for the happy medium between the undesirable extremes of making a nuisance of himself and remaining silently aloof.

When an offer is made, it typically is accompanied by a request that some response be made almost immediately. In many instances, this places a student in the difficult position of having to make a decision before he has completed his canvass or before he has heard from other law firms in which he is interested. No advice as to what to do with this problem can ever be very satisfactory. You should recognize, however, that the ultimate decision to join any particular firm is going to involve some risks. The best you can do is to hold the risks to a minimum.

Miscellaneous

Veterans and Non-Veterans

The problem of finding a job faced by the law graduate who is subject to military service is an extremely difficult one. His prospects for finding work immediately following graduation are usually limited to the very large law firms and corporations. The matter of law school standing assumes addi-

tional importance in this area of limited opportunity. This does not mean that such students should refrain from interviewing prospective employers in areas which interest them. On the contrary, every contact, every acquaintance, and every fact that can be obtained about the Bar is going to be helpful in resolving the placement problems to be solved after military service.

New York City is one area where less attention is given to the matter of military status. The big law firms there are far more inclined to disregard this factor and measure each applicant on the basis of other relevant considerations. Accordingly, for non-veterans whose grades place them in the upper one-third of the class, the New York opportunities are especially recommended.

Placement Service for Graduates

Placement assistance is available to graduates as well as prospective graduates. All interested graduates are provided with the placement bulletin, and an active file listing graduates currently seeking jobs or a change of job is maintained and is checked against all new opportunities.

This service is particularly meaningful to persons facing military service immediately after graduation. It is suggested that such persons contact the Placement Office at least six months in advance of their release from military service, make any appropriate changes in the placement information accumulated during student days, and generally re-activate the process of seeking employment.

It is important in this connection that a complete placement folder for all students be made prior to graduation. The impressions of faculty members which are often quite important are far more accurate and meaningful when obtained during residency in the school. The placement file accumulated during the second and third year in school is transferred to and becomes a part of the student's permanent file after graduation so that the information contained therein is always instantly available. It is up to you to see that this information is complete and accurate while you are in school.

Keep Us Informed

The efficiency of the Placement Office and the service it provides depends in large measure upon the cooperation of those it seeks to serve. Accordingly, it is most important that you keep us informed of your wishes and doings from time to time as they relate to the task of finding congenial employment. Frequently, you will uncover opportunities for jobs of which we have no knowledge. You perform a service by passing such in-

formation on to us so that it can be made available to others in appropriate cases. Similarly, when you learn that a particular opportunity is filled you can assist us by letting us know so that we can prevent some other person from wasting valuable time.

As graduates you will be members of an ever-increasing group of Michigan Alumni, the great percentage of whom continue to be actively interested in the affairs of their school and its students. Michigan Alumni everywhere form the best source of assistance to future Michigan graduates. As a graduate you help yourself and your school by continuing the tradition of lending a hand to the future alumni.

Long before you attain the status of employer you can assist future students of the school by letting the school know of conditions in your area for employment and of known opportunities.

Reading Material on Hand in the Placement Office

The Placement Office has a growing library of materials selected to aid law students interested in a choice of career. In addition, you will find legal directories, alumni directories, lists of recommended law firms for certain cities, loose leaf reports by former students of experiences during job hunting expeditions, and other material designed to assist in the placement process. All of this is for use by second and third year students. You should take the time to visit the office and find out what material is available.

In this connection, informal reports by students after a job hunting expedition during Christmas or spring vacation have proved most helpful to the following year's class. You can help us by adding a report of your experiences to this file.

When all is said and done, the task of finding a congenial location inevitably boils down to an individual problem for each student. The Placement Office does not attempt to solve this problem for any person. We are ready, willing, and able to provide assistance, and experience has shown that the job hunting task is materially reduced for those who use the facilities of the Placement Office. In any event, it is never too soon to begin to answer the many questions which will arise in connection with the placement process. We urge you to start now.